



Department of Justice

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MIAMI TAXIDERMIST SENTENCED FOR WILDLIFE SMUGGLING

WASHINGTON – Enrique Gomez De Molina, 48, of Miami Beach, Fla., was sentenced in federal court in Miami today to 20 months in prison for illegal trafficking in endangered and protected wildlife, announced Ignacia S. Moreno, Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division at the Department of Justice; Wifredo A. Ferrer, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida; and Luis J. Santiago, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, Southeast Region. De Molina was also sentenced to one year of supervised release to follow his prison term, a \$6,000 fine and was ordered to forfeit all of the smuggled wildlife in his possession.

According to documents filed with the court, the defendant attempted to import wildlife species including skins of a Java kingfisher (*Halcyon cyanoventris*) and a collared kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*), one mounted lesser bird of paradise (*Paradisaea minor*), the skin of a juvenile hawk-eagle (*Spizaetus* sp.), the carcass remnant of a slow loris (*Nycticebus coucang*) and the carcass remnant of a lesser mouse deer (*Tragulus javanicus*), without proper declarations when imported into the United States and without the required permits. In some cases, commercial transactions in listed species, such as the slow loris, are not allowed at all.

In order to protect certain species of wildlife against over-exploitation, the United States is a signatory to an international treaty known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Appendix I of CITES includes species that are threatened with extinction and for which no trade is allowed for commercial purposes. Appendix II of CITES includes wildlife species which although not necessarily threatened with extinction now, may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is strictly regulated. Before importing a specimen of any animal protected under Appendix I of CITES from any foreign country, a valid foreign CITES export permit from the country of origin, or a CITES re-export certificate from a country of re-export, must be obtained as well as a valid "import permit" from the United States. Before importing a specimen of any animal protected under Appendix II of CITES from any foreign country, a valid foreign export permit or re-export certificate must be obtained. Federal law also prohibits the importation of fish or wildlife into

the United States without proper declaration to both U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS).

According to the allegations contained in the information and a detailed factual statement in the court record, De Molina's illegal wildlife trafficking activities extended from late 2009 through February 2011, and included numerous species and shipments, involving contacts in Bali, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Canada and China. The joint factual statement describes the importation into the U.S. of the parts, skins and remains of species, including a king cobra, a pangolin, hornbills, birds of paradise, and the skulls of babirusa and orangutans. Despite the interception of two shipments in late 2009 that were ultimately forfeited by De Molina and abandoned, he continued to solicit protected wildlife from his suppliers via the Internet, and to select specific animals from photographs to be provided to him. The parts or carcasses of the wildlife he selected would then be shipped to him without the permits or declarations required by law. Some of the endangered and protected wildlife he selected was alive at the time it was photographed, including a woolly stork, a slow loris, and a hornbill, and later sent to him dead.

After receipt, De Molina would incorporate various parts and segments of the wildlife into taxidermy pieces at a studio in downtown Miami. He offered these pieces through galleries and on the Internet for prices ranging up to \$80,000. In December 2010, pieces constructed by De Molina were exhibited during Art Basel week at the Scope Art Fair in Miami, resulting in at least one significant sale and the subsequent illegal export of the piece to the Canada.

"Mr. De Molina trafficked in highly endangered species in violation of the law, disguising commercial exploitation of endangered species as artwork," said Ignacia S. Moreno, Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division. "Today, Mr. De Molina has been held fully accountable for his illegal actions, which are prohibited by both U.S. and international law."

"For years, DeMolina illegally imported parts and remains of endangered and threatened species, including a cobra, a pangolin, hornbills, and the skulls of babirusa and orangutans, and used them to create taxidermy pieces that he sold for as much as \$80,000," said U.S. Attorney Wifredo A. Ferrer. "Trafficking in endangered and threatened species, whether for personal profit or under the guise of art, is illegal. Together with our law enforcement partners, we will strictly enforce the laws that protect our environment and our wildlife."

"This case is an excellent example of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's commitment to investigate and interdict the commercialization of protected wildlife species," said Luis J. Santiago, Special Agent in Charge of the FWS Office of Law Enforcement, Southeast Region. "The taxidermy work that Mr. De Molina considered artwork is nothing more than a shameful use of the world's wildlife resources, by promoting the illegal take, and trafficking of protected species."

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of the FWS, which brought the investigation to a successful conclusion. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Thomas Watts-FitzGerald and Trial Attorney Shennie Patel with the Environmental Crimes Section of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

To view court filed documents and photos from court filings, visit:
www.fws.gov/miamitaxidermisttrafficking.html.

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